

Welcome Address of Professor Harald Schuh, the IVS Chair

Honorable Authorities,
Distinguished Guests,
Dear Colleagues,
Dear IVS Family!

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you in St. Petersburg to our 5th IVS General Meeting and thank you, Professor Viktorov and Professor Finkelstein, for the warm welcome words. I would like to express my gratitude that this General Meeting is held here in Russia, hosted by the Institute of Applied Astronomy. As the General Meeting is held every two years in the period January to March, the weather very much depends on the hemisphere where the conference takes place. Two years ago in Concepcion, Chile, it was summer and it was warm. This year we expect weather much colder than in Chile and maybe even with some snow or rain. But knowing the hospitality of the Russian hosts, I am sure our meeting will be very warm and pleasant again.

More than 120 participants from 18 countries and from 77 different institutions have registered for this conference and a high number of IVS components have sent their representatives. Considering that IVS has about 270 Associated Members, the large attendance in the General Meeting is highly encouraging and shows that the IVS is an active and vital international organization.

The General Meeting of the IVS is the important meeting for all the various components. During the conference experiences will be exchanged and new results will be reported. One of the goals of this meeting is to strengthen cooperation and to build bridges between the various components for a better understanding and for improvements. These goals were considered by the Program Committee.

I express my thanks to Dirk Behrend, Director of the IVS Coordinating Center, who coordinated the Program Committee, and also to its members: Patrick Charlot (France), Andrey Finkelstein (Russia), Ed Himwich (USA), Yasuhiro Koyama (Japan), Jinling Li (China), Zinovy Malkin (Russia), Axel Nothnagel (Germany), Bill Petrachenko (Canada), Oleg Titov (Australia), and Alan Whitney (USA), and Harald Schuh (Austria) was also in the Program Committee.

Just to give you an idea about the organization of the program: one week before the deadline for submission there were just 2 papers, two days before deadline we had 9, one day before deadline 17 papers and until the deadline (which was on December 21st) we have received 35 abstracts, only. Then the



deadline was extended till January and finally we ended up with 112 submissions. Thus, the Program Committee had to be very flexible and several presentations had to be changed from oral to poster to keep the limited time that we have.

Now, the Program Committee has set up a very interesting program for the next two and a half days. With the excursion on Thursday and the various splinter meetings on Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday we will have a tough week with a very tight schedule. I am looking forward to fruitful discussions and expect a very successful meeting.

For the organization of the conference we employed Web-based technology, which is a very efficient tool. In addition many things still had to be organized “manually”. I would like to thank the groups involved in the organization for their excellent work. In particular I would like to thank Dirk Behrend for the great job he did during the past months.

The Local Organizing Committee has done an outstanding job in preparing the meeting, and I would like to express my gratitude to Prof. Andrey Finkelstein (chair of the LOC), and to the members of the Local Organizing Committee: Alexander Ipatov, Sergey Smolentsev, Nadia Shuygina, and Elena Skurikhina for their work, guaranteeing a pleasant stay in St. Petersburg.

The success of the fifth General Meeting will depend on the contributions of the participants. Highly interesting and important contributions will be provided as oral presentations, as posters, and during discussions. I thank all the speakers, the session chairpersons, and the authors in advance for their excellent presentations. The value of the conference is maintained by providing your papers to be printed shortly after the conference in the Proceedings. Thanks to all—let us keep up the momentum and finish the Proceedings in time.

The General Meeting will show results of VLBI at the state-of-the-art and will place emphasis on VLBI2010. The plans for future developments within the IVS and the transition to the next generation VLBI system are of great importance and need coordination in order to make best use of the international resources. With the VLBI2010 Committee, chaired by Bill Petrachenko, we have an excellent basis for developing our future. VLBI2010 will be a challenge not only until 2010 but for many more years to come.

I am certain that the meeting will be very successful and will stimulate our work. I wish all attendants to enjoy the conference and the splinter meetings—as well as the Russian hospitality.

Thank you!